



Inclusion, Equity and Diversity Action Plan

2026 - 2031



DEPARTMENT OF
CORRECTIONS
ARA POUTAMA AOTEAROA



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1. Our purpose

This plan enables the People Plan to deliver a safe, supported, and capable workforce at Department of Corrections - Ara Poutama Aotearoa.

It clearly articulates our organisational commitment to building a workplace that is inclusive, equitable, and strengthened by diversity. It provides an organisation-wide framework and priority focus areas for the next five years, setting shared expectations that inclusion, equity, and diversity are embedded in everyday practice, decision making, and leadership.

Inclusion, equity, and diversity are critical enablers of staff safety, wellbeing, and capability. The work our people undertake is complex, demanding, and often high risk. When staff feel respected, valued, and able to be themselves at work, psychological safety is strengthened. This supports people to speak up, learn, collaborate, and seek help when needed. Inclusive environments improve wellbeing and engagement, reduce harm and conflict, and enable staff to perform effectively in challenging conditions.

Equity across systems, processes, and everyday practices ensures fair access to opportunities, development, and progression. This enables all staff to build capability and contribute fully, reinforcing a culture aligned with our values and focused on positive outcomes. Together, inclusion and equity drive engagement, performance, and retention.

This plan builds on existing work, identifies priority gaps, and aligns organisational effort to strengthen these conditions. Its intent is to create and sustain a workforce that is safe, well supported, and capable, recognising that inclusive and equitable systems underpin wellbeing, trust, performance, and effective risk management.

Inclusion, equity, and diversity also directly enable delivery of Hōkai Rangi by strengthening relationships, improving collaboration, and supporting continuous learning and change. A more inclusive workplace enhances decision making in complex environments and contributes to better outcomes for those in our care and under our supervision.

This plan gives effect to our organisational outcomes, values, and people strategies, and supports our obligations as a public service employer under the Public Service Act 2020, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and wider good employer expectations. It reinforces that inclusion, equity, and diversity are not separate initiatives, but core to how Corrections leads, operates, and delivers its mandate.

Our key focus areas

1. Addressing bias and discrimination

2. Cultural capability and safety

3. Improved support, safety, and wellbeing for identity-based communities

4. Amplifying and strengthening the voice of our people

2. Context and foundations

Corrections' operating environment

Corrections operates in a complex, high-risk environment. Our work spans custodial, community, and corporate settings, often involving people with high and complex needs. Staff are required to operate safely and professionally in challenging circumstances, balancing care, control, rehabilitation, and public safety. This context places ongoing demands on capability, resilience, and shared leadership. It also underscores the importance of a workplace culture where people feel safe, supported, and able to perform at their best.

Workforce profile

Corrections has a large and geographically dispersed workforce, with a significant proportion of staff working in frontline operational roles across prisons and community corrections sites. A smaller proportion of staff work in corporate and enabling functions. This split creates differing work experiences, risks, and needs across the organisation.

Any approach to embedding inclusion, equity, and diversity must account for this range of roles, locations, and operating realities, and ensure that initiatives are accessible, relevant, and meaningful for both frontline and corporate staff.

Known challenges and opportunities

The operating context and workforce profile present known challenges, including workforce pressures, variable access to development opportunities, and differing experiences of safety, wellbeing, and inclusion across groups and locations. Structural and system-level barriers can disproportionately affect some communities, impacting trust, retention, and engagement.

At the same time, Corrections has a significant opportunity: a committed workforce, strong organisational values, and active employee-led networks that provide a platform to embed inclusive practices, strengthen fairness and transparency, and build a more equitable workplace that supports better outcomes for staff, whānau, and the communities we serve.

Foundations already in place

Corrections have made visible progress in laying the foundations for a more inclusive and culturally capable organisation. There has been a strong focus on building awareness of the value of diversity, strengthening cultural and community capability, and creating safer environments where people feel able to express their identity.

Dedicated Cultural Capability, Pasifika, and Inclusion & Diversity teams have supported this growth by building capability, improving practice, and providing people-centred insights that inform organisational change. The continued development of employee-led networks (ELNs) has created safe and supportive communities where staff feel they belong and are valued. These networks have also contributed meaningful insights into what is working well and where improvements are needed, helping to shape more effective and responsive approaches.

Visible symbols of inclusion, such as Rainbow lanyards and Hidden Disabilities Sunflower lanyards, have helped to strengthen a sense of safety and acceptance across our workplaces. Our annual Inclusion and Wellbeing Calendar has also become a valued resource recognising and celebrating the diversity of our workforce.

3. Our approach to developing the plan

This plan was developed using internal data, external evidence, a current state analysis, and targeted engagement to build a clear and comprehensive picture of inclusion, equity, and diversity at Corrections.

Internal insights were drawn from Shaping Corrections results, Te Taunaki Public Service Census responses, workforce data, exit interviews, Inclusion, Equity, and Diversity Council (IEDC) priorities, and wider engagement and wellbeing related feedback. These sources helped us understand staff experiences and where outcomes differ across communities. People and Capability Leads also contributed through workshops to identify current initiatives, opportunities, and areas requiring greater focus.

External insights were drawn from Public Service Commission guidance, wider government action plans, cross agency scans, research, and best practice literature aligned with public sector workforce diversity priorities. These inputs were deliberately brought together to inform a single, coherent framework for inclusion, equity, and diversity at Corrections. Rather than adding a further layer of activity, this plan integrates and aligns existing commitments and system level priorities, providing a unified focus across all initiatives that touch inclusion, equity, and diversity. This approach reduces duplication and complexity, strengthens line of sight between related action plans, and supports consistent expectations across the organisation. It also helps identify system level performance issues and where inequity or exclusion may be occurring, ensuring effort is targeted for the greatest impact.

A structured current state scan highlighted existing initiatives, workforce challenges and risks, areas of strength, and effective practice. This included reviewing progress already underway through the

Te Taunaki aligned action plans and wider organisational work programmes. This recognises that significant activity is already in motion across the organisation. The scan considered staff experience, wellbeing needs, workplace culture, and the experiences of different communities, ensuring the plan builds on existing work and reflects the lived realities of our workforce rather than creating disconnected or short term actions.

Engagement was central throughout the process. Workshops and discussions with People and Capability workstreams, enabling functions, and key stakeholders helped test assumptions and confirm priorities. Executive Leadership and governance groups, including the IEDC, contributed important community perspectives and surfaced issues not always visible in data. Staff voice was incorporated through surveys, census data, exit interviews, workshops, PSA and CANZ themes, and engagement with Employee Led Networks and the IEDC.

This approach ensures the plan is grounded in staff experience and reinforces that inclusion, equity, and diversity are shared organisational responsibilities. Ongoing listening, learning, and adaptation will continue as the plan is implemented.

4. Focus areas and goals

The focus areas in this plan set the strategic direction for inclusion, equity, and diversity at Corrections. They describe what we must strengthen and why, rather than prescribing the detailed actions, which the whole organisation will contribute to.

Delivery will be supported through a companion implementation and measurement document. This document will set out the key activities, dates, and measures of success for each focus area and provide clear line of sight between strategic intent, planned work, and outcomes. It will be the primary tool for coordinating delivery and monitoring progress.

The companion document will collate work already underway across the organisation, identify planned initiatives, and highlight gaps where further action is required. Where gaps or duplication are identified, we will partner with business owners, service owners, and enabling functions to align effort, strengthen impact, and avoid unnecessary complexity.

Focus 1: Addressing bias and discrimination

What this means

Improve safety and inclusion for all people by identifying and addressing the impact of bias and discrimination within our systems, processes, policies, practices, and behaviour.

Current state

- Experiences of discrimination remain high, with 25% of staff reporting discrimination in the past year (vs 14% Public Service). Highest areas include ethnicity/national origin/race/colour (10.5%), age (7.4%), political opinion (6.9%), and sex/gender (6.9%), indicating gaps in fairness, transparency, and equitable treatment across communities.¹
- Bullying, harassment, and unacceptable behaviour are significantly higher, with 19.8% reporting bullying/harassment (vs 12.1% Public Service), 2.2% reporting sexual harassment (vs 0.8%), and 3.7% reporting racial harassment (vs 1.6%). This reinforces systemic issues in culture, safety, and behaviour expectations.¹
- Reporting does occur but trust in resolution is low, with 54% of those experiencing bullying/harassment choosing to report it, yet only 39% satisfied with how matters were resolved, signalling low confidence in organisational processes and outcomes.¹
- The Leadership Development Framework (LDF) provides consistent language and expectations for 'Leader of Self', but awareness and application of unconscious bias mitigations remain low and inconsistent, limiting its effectiveness.
- Some communities experience poorer outcomes, compounded by intersectionality, which intensifies experiences of discrimination, exclusion, and reduced trust in fairness.
- There is continued reliance on cultural support, translation, and informal guidance from staff, often without appropriate safety parameters, recognition or workload consideration, leading to inequitable burdens.

1. Te Taunaki Public Service Census 2025

Areas of delivery

- 1.1. Strengthen organisational capability to prevent and address bias and discrimination, including racism, sexual harassment, accessibility, and inclusive behaviour, with clear leadership expectations.
- 1.2. Embed equity across people systems and decision-making, focusing on high-impact areas such as recruitment, progression, development, resourcing, and team inclusion.
- 1.3. Improve safety, transparency, and accountability, ensuring complaints, reporting, and response processes build trust and confidence.
- 1.4. Drive sustained culture change, addressing harmful behaviours and reinforcing respectful, inclusive workplace norms.

What does good look like?

Corrections is a workplace where people feel safe, treated fairly, and confident that bias and discrimination are recognised and addressed.

We would see:

- Staff feel safe to speak up, with growing confidence that concerns are handled fairly, consistently, and respectfully.
- Inappropriate behaviour is challenged early, with leaders and teams taking responsibility rather than defaulting to formal escalation.
- Leaders consistently role model inclusive behaviour and apply awareness of bias in recruitment, development, and everyday decisions.
- People systems and processes are experienced as transparent and fair across teams and communities.
- Lived experience and staff voice, including ELNs, visibly inform improvements to systems and practice.
- Differences in experience and treatment reduce over time, signalling more equitable outcomes across the organisation.

Focus 2: Cultural capability and safety

What this means

People of all ethnicities and diverse backgrounds feel culturally safe, respected, and valued. Staff have broad cultural awareness and competency to work confidently with colleagues and people in our management. Cultural capability is embedded in everyday practice, and cultural identity is recognised as a strength.

Current state

- The organisation has an ethnically diverse workforce (European 61.4%, Māori 19.5%, Asian 16.5%, Pacific 16.4%, Middle Eastern/Latin American/African 2.6%), but experiences of cultural safety, inclusion, and understanding remain inconsistent, particularly for ethnically diverse staff.²
- Māori Crown capability measures have improved across all indicators between 2021 and 2025, yet capability and confidence still vary significantly across the workforce, with 75% understanding Treaty responsibilities, 71% comfortable with tikanga practices, 60% supported to build Te Reo Māori.²
- Pacific staff face disproportionate role distribution and career barriers, with 90% in frontline roles and only 42% feeling positive about their career progression, signalling inequitable development and advancement pathways.³
- Experiences of racial discrimination and harassment are higher than Public Service benchmarks, with 10.5% reporting discrimination based on ethnicity/national origin/race/colour (vs 5.4%) and 3.7% reporting racial harassment (vs 1.6%), highlighting persistent inequities in cultural safety and treatment.²
- Ethnically diverse staff report inconsistent support, cultural understanding, and safety within teams and leadership, contributing to experiences of exclusion, cultural misunderstanding, and inequity that impact wellbeing and practice quality.⁴
- Recruitment and career progression processes lack the range of cultural responsiveness, creating risks of inadvertent discrimination and uneven access to development and advancement.⁴
- ELNs representing ethnic communities play a strong cultural role, celebrating and sharing culture, supported by growing engagement such as increased demand for the Inclusion and Wellbeing Calendar, a positive indicator of cultural visibility and inclusion.
- Despite growing diversity, leadership representation does not reflect the communities served, limiting lived-experience perspectives in decision-making and cultural leadership capability.⁵

2. Te Taunaki Public Service Census 2025

3. The Current State of Pasifika & Ara Poutama Aotearoa 2023

4. Data Sourced from Shaping Corrections

5. Stats NZ 2024

Areas of delivery

- 2.1. Build cultural capability and responsiveness across the organisation, focusing on behaviours, relationships, and effective work across dynamic and diverse cultures.
- 2.2. Recognise, value, and utilise cultural expertise, ensuring lived experience and cultural knowledge inform practice and decision-making.
- 2.3. Increase ethnic diversity and representation in leadership, governance, and decision-making forums.
- 2.4. Equip staff with practical tools, guidance, and support to work effectively with culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

What does good look like?

Corrections is a culturally confident organisation where people from all backgrounds feel culturally safe, respected, and valued.

We would see:

- Staff experience greater cultural safety, with fewer instances of exclusion, misunderstanding, or culturally unsafe behaviour.
- Leaders and teams show confidence working respectfully across cultures, including with culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- Cultural perspectives and knowledge are considered early and routinely in decisions, policy, and practice.
- People systems support culturally fair recruitment, development, and progression outcomes.
- Cultural expertise and lived experience are recognised as strengths and used appropriately in roles and decision making.
- Leadership and governance better reflect the diversity of our workforce and the communities we serve.

Focus 3: Improved support, safety, and wellbeing for identity-based communities

What this means

Corrections is a workplace where staff with diverse identities, including disabled and rainbow communities, feel safe, respected, supported, and able to thrive. Their needs are understood and met through inclusive leadership, accessible systems, and culturally safe practices.

Current state

- Wellbeing concerns are increasing, with 17.2% of staff reporting mental health challenges in 2025 (up from 13% in 2021). Staff also report lower levels of safety, wellbeing, and leadership support than Public Service averages.⁶
- Manager and organisational support are weaker than sector averages, with 73% feeling their manager cares about wellbeing (vs 81% Public Service) and 62% agreeing Corrections promotes a respectful workplace (vs 73%).⁷
- Inclusion and belonging indicators are lower, with 70% feeling valued (vs 79%) and 77% feeling comfortable being themselves at work (vs 80%).⁷
- Disabled staff remain under-counted and under-supported, with only 3.3%⁷ of our staff identifying as disabled compared to an estimated 38.2%⁸ disabled people in employment within New Zealand. Satisfaction with accommodations is low (47%, vs 55% Public Service), highlighting data gaps, inconsistent accessibility practices, and bias in accommodation processes.⁷
- Neurodiverse representation (14.5%)* aligns with NZ prevalence, but experiences of support, inclusion, and accessibility vary significantly and are not well documented.⁷
- Rainbow staff experience lower safety⁹ and more unfair treatment, with 6.1% staff identifying as rainbow which is below the 8.9% Public Service average.⁷
- Experiences of discrimination and exclusion persist across communities, and issues are compounded when intersectionality is considered.
- Limited progress has been made on delivering the Public Service Four Point Plans for disability and rainbow communities.
- ELNs exist across a wide range of communities (e.g. wāhine, parents, carers, immigrants, faith, menopause, veterans), but there are questions about whether this is sufficient for meeting engagement needs and embedding workforce strategy.

**This figure reflects staff who identified as disabled, as well as staff who chose 'prefer not to answer' or 'don't know' in relation to disability, who also indicated they had a neurodivergent or mental health condition.*

6. Te Taunaki Public Service Census 2021 & 2025

7. Te Taunaki Public Service Census 2025

8. NZ Labour Market Statistics 2025 Whaikaha

9. Shaping Corrections theme 2024

Areas of delivery

- 3.1. Strengthen psychological safety and everyday inclusion so staff feel safe to speak up, contribute, and perform effectively.
- 3.2. Build and embed inclusive leadership capability, with clear expectations and accountability for creating safe and inclusive teams.
- 3.3. Partner with identity-based communities to strengthen organisational capability, visibility, and confidence through lived experience and staff voice.
- 3.4. Embed accessibility, reasonable accommodations, and inclusive design across people and business systems to enable equitable participation and performance.

What does good look like?

Corrections is a workplace where staff with diverse identities feel safe, supported, and able to thrive.

We would see:

- Stronger psychological safety and belonging, with staff confident being themselves at work.
- Managers actively supporting wellbeing and inclusion, creating safe and supportive team environments.
- Disabled and rainbow communities experience fewer barriers to participation, progression, and everyday work.
- Accessibility and reasonable accommodations are timely, fair, and enabling in practice.
- Better understanding of identity based experiences through improved insights and engagement.
- Fewer experiences of exclusion or unfair treatment, indicating sustained improvements in culture and systems.

Focus 4: Amplifying and strengthening the voice of our people

What this means

We value and include the voices, lived experiences, and insights of our people to meaningfully inform work plans, projects, and decisions across Corrections.

Current state

- A strong engagement baseline exists, demonstrated by a 54.6% Te Taunaki response rate from more than 11,000 staff, showing a willingness to participate.¹⁰ However, engagement mechanisms are inconsistent, and expectations or pathways for engagement are not always clear.
- While 69% of staff feel like valued team members and 77% feel comfortable being themselves¹⁰, qualitative data shows a strong desire for deeper equity, inclusion, and belonging, reinforcing the important contribution of ELNs.
- Staff highlighted disconnects between leadership and frontline experience, and inconsistent or ineffective communication across teams and leadership levels, contributing to perceptions that feedback does not always influence outcomes.¹¹
- Employees expressed a clear desire for more data-informed decision-making, greater trust, and more delegation in decision-making, signalling opportunities to improve capability, transparency, and empowerment.¹¹
- ELNs provide safe, caring communities and play an important cultural and inclusion role, but access remains limited in custodial spaces, and network maturity, influence, and support vary widely across groups.
- The value and purpose of ELNs is not yet widely understood, reducing visibility of their contribution to organisational culture, wellbeing, and engagement outcomes.

^{10.} Te Taunaki Public Service Census 2025

^{11.} Shaping Corrections

Areas of delivery

- 4.1. Strengthen consistent and inclusive engagement practice across the organisation, with clear expectations for how staff voice informs decisions.
- 4.2. Embed staff voice and feedback loops into policy, project, and service design to improve relevance, trust, and outcomes.
- 4.3. Enable strong, sustainable Employee-Led Networks (ELNs) through capability, resourcing, and effective organisational and cross-agency connections.
- 4.4. Improve access and participation in ELNs, particularly for custodial staff and others with operational constraints.

What does good look like?

The voice of our people is consistently sought, heard, and reflected in decisions across Corrections.

We would see:

- Staff feel heard and valued, with increased confidence that speaking up leads to action or change.
- Clear and consistent engagement practices, so staff understand how and when their input will be used.
- Visible feedback loops that show how staff insight has informed decisions or priorities.
- Stronger connection between leadership and frontline experience in policy, project, and service design.
- Employee Led Networks that are well understood, supported, and able to contribute safely and effectively.
- Improved access to participation in ELNs and engagement opportunities, including for custodial staff.



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